

**Neighborhood Networks Quarterly Conference Call**  
**“Consortia Sustainability - Topics in Self-Sufficiency for**  
**Neighborhood Networks Centers and Consortia”**  
**June 7, 2005**

**Conference Call Summary**

On June 7, 2005, Neighborhood Networks held its third quarterly consortia conference call entitled, “Consortia Sustainability – Topics in Self-Sufficiency for Neighborhood Networks Centers and Consortia.” The call featured two guest speakers from new Neighborhood Networks consortia - Edna Moffett of the Georgia Neighborhood Networks Consortium and Miles Graham of the Arkansas Neighborhood Networks consortium, known as Community Builders of Arkansas. Both Moffett and Graham were chosen as speakers because of their experience in building sustainability and self-efficiency for Neighborhood Networks centers and consortia. The call also featured several Neighborhood Networks staff: Stephanie Kinlock, who works on national partnership development; Tara McCall and James Bennett, members of the Neighborhood Networks consortium development team; Kenya Crumel, director of consortia development; and Shawn Escoffery, project director for consortia and national partnership development.

This call focused on strategies for consortia sustainability and self-sufficiency. Current consortia members and consortia development technical assistance staff discussed how existing centers and consortia increased their sustainability. This call was designed to help Neighborhood Networks centers and consortia develop strategies for:

- Technical Capacity Building.
- Fundraising.
- Staffing and Volunteer Solutions.
- Grantwriting.

***Highlights from the Call:***

**Technical Capacity Building**

The speakers began the call by discussing strategies for technical capacity building. First, the speakers described strategic planning, and how this process can build organizational capacity. Below are some of the benefits of Strategic Planning:

1. Clearly defines the purpose of the organization and establishes realistic goals and objectives consistent with the organizational mission. The strategic plan helps NN centers and consortia accomplish these goals and objectives in a defined timeframe within the organization’s capacity for implementation.
2. Communicates organizational goals and objectives to the organization’s constituents.

3. Develops a sense of ownership of the plan.
4. Ensures the most effective use of the organization's resources by focusing the resources on key priorities.
5. Provides a base from which progress can be measured and establishes a mechanism for informed change when needed.
6. Has an important value in building a consensus about where an organization is going.

Neighborhood Networks centers and consortia may encounter challenges in executing goals and objectives listed in the strategic plan if they do not employ an organizational action plan. Action plans specify the actions needed to address each of the top organizational issues and reach each of the associated goals, as well as the time frame for accomplishing these goals. Developing local partnerships can also contribute to building the technical capacity of Neighborhood Networks centers and consortia.

### **Fundraising**

In order for any Neighborhood Networks center or consortium to achieve sustainability, the organization must tap into the financial resources that exist in its own community. Fundraising can be a powerful and effective way of accessing financial resources and cultivating relationships that help Neighborhood Networks centers and consortia become more self-sufficient and sustain their programs or the programs of their member centers well into the future.

Whether your organization is carrying out its very first fundraising project or beginning a new initiative in an established fundraising program, you should always start your fundraising campaign by asking those closest to your organization for support. If you picture your center or consortium as a “dart board,” in the center is your board of directors, and in separate concentric circles moving away from the center are the staff and volunteers, vendors, community businesses and individuals, and finally, foundations. The goal is not to raise a great deal of funds from those closest to your organization, but rather to build a high percentage of participation at any level. While attempting to raise funds it is important to think about the entire funding universe rather than the most obvious choices or those closest to you. Diversifying funding sources is essential in effective fundraising campaigns. This show of support can go a long way in convincing potential funders about the dedication of the organization and its people.

### **Grantwriting strategies**

The development of strong grantwriting skills should be a priority for all Neighborhood Networks centers and consortia representatives as you work toward achieving self-sufficiency for your organizations. The following tips should prove useful for your organizations, as you seek grants and foundation funds for your centers.

1. Do your homework – research, research, and research.
2. Follow the application guidelines.
3. Be concise.
4. Be specific.

5. Define your goals precisely, how you will reach them, and how you will measure your success.
6. Show how the project relates to your organization's future.
7. Describe how you will fund the project once the grant money runs out.
8. Think beyond money.
9. Provide clear contact information and avoid sending piles of fliers, videos, books, and similar materials.
10. Start early and be patient.
11. Use your connections (network).
12. Participate in professional development workshops and activities and subscribe to RFP (Request for Proposals) e-mail listservs.

Following these suggestions does not guarantee that you will receive the funds you seek, but they will make your application more competitive.

### **Staffing/Volunteer Solutions**

Having the support of staff and volunteers is a crucial component of sustaining Neighborhood Networks centers and consortia and helping these organizations to achieve self-sufficiency. Recruiting and retaining qualified and committed volunteers can better position your organization to sustain the work it is currently doing, and to expand to do even more in the future. There are three basic methods of volunteer recruitment:

*1. Warm Body Recruitment* – This method involves disseminating general information about your organization – using flyers, brochures, etc. – and is most appropriate when you are attempting to recruit a large number of volunteers to commit for only a short period of time and to fulfill responsibilities that do not require any specialized skills or qualifications.

*2. Targeted Recruitment* – This method involves developing a recruitment campaign geared toward a specific targeted audience, and is often more successful than the “Warm Body” method. This method is most appropriate when you are recruiting for volunteer jobs that require some specific skills or characteristics that are not commonly found.

*3. Concentric Circles Recruitment* – This method involves targeting groups of people who are already in contact with your organization and who are familiar with the work your organization does in the community.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, technical capacity building can provide the foundation for sustainability for Neighborhood Networks centers and consortia, while grantwriting, fundraising, and volunteer staffing can help your organization achieve self-sufficiency now and in the future.

The final quarterly consortia conference call will be held on September 13, 2005, and will cover “Basics in Consortia Marketing and Partnership Development.”